

POPULATION INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE

First Annual Report

(January 1st, 1937—December 31st, 1937)

ORIGINS OF COMMITTEE

THE Committee had its origin in the Annual Galton Lecture entitled "Eugenics in the Light of Population Trends" given on February 16th, 1935, to the *Eugenics Society* by Professor A. M. Carr-Saunders. Acting upon a suggestion contained in this lecture, the Council of the *Eugenics Society* took the initiative in calling the Population Investigation Committee together.

The Committee, while made up of representatives of various organizations, and of certain individuals elected in a private capacity, is an autonomous body. It is in no way subordinate to any of the organizations represented upon it. The Committee has power to add to its numbers as it thinks fit.

AIMS OF COMMITTEE

The Committee has been formed to examine the trends of population in Great Britain and the Colonies and to investigate the causes of these trends, with special reference to the fall of the birth-rate. It is not a propagandist Committee and is not concerned with advocating any social measures with the object of influencing the movement of populations. It will be impossible to adopt social measures without fuller information than we possess at present, and it can be taken as certain that any policy which, at a later date, the Government may see fit to adopt, will be influenced by the findings of the new inquiries of the General Register Office, and by the findings of the Committee.

FINANCE

The Committee receives no subsidies from Government sources. It depends entirely upon donations from interested individuals and organizations.

A statement of its financial needs and an income and expenditure account will be

found at the end of this report. From the former it will be seen that the Committee has schemes for research which require the services of six research workers and would cost approximately £4,000 a year. At present, the Committee has two research workers and its expenses come to approximately £1,000 a year. It has, at the moment, a balance of only £762 12s. 2d.

The Committee has its headquarters at the offices of the *Eugenics Society*, which has placed its staff at the Committee's disposal. The Committee, therefore, has practically no overhead expenses and all its available funds are devoted to the direct furtherance of its aims.

The Committee wishes to express its indebtedness to the organizations and persons named at the end of this report, for generous contributions; also to Miss Marion Crichton for much valuable assistance.

THE FIRST YEAR

In the autumn of 1936 three books* published by members of the Committee attracted widespread interest. With remarkable suddenness, the press of the country took notice of the fact that, if recent trends in fertility continued, a decline of the population of Great Britain would, without immigration, be inevitable. Two articles under the general heading "The Dwindling Family" appeared in *The Times* of September 28th and 29th, 1936, the last being supported by a leading article. These were widely quoted, and from this moment the population problem became alive. Little notice, however, was taken of the Committee until Mr. Ronald Cartland, Member for Birmingham, King's Norton, introduced into the House of Commons, on February

* *World Population*. By A. M. Carr-Saunders; *Population Movements*. By R. R. Kuczynski; *The Struggle for Population*. By D. V. Glass. All published by the Oxford University Press.

10th, 1937, a motion to the effect that the threatened decline of the population might constitute a danger and asking for an inquiry and report by the Government. There took place on this occasion an instructive and well-informed debate which occupies fifty-five columns of *Hansard* (Vol. 320, No. 52). Mr. Cartland made an appreciative reference to the Committee's work, and it was noteworthy that not one of the eleven speakers who followed Mr. Cartland disputed his plea that the subject was important and required further investigation. In replying for the Government, Mr. R. S. Hudson said that it was not proposed to set on foot a new and independent inquiry; it was intended rather to intensify the inquiries which were continuously carried out by the Registrar-General. The matter, he said, was primarily one for the Government, but outside assistance would be welcomed.

Shortly after this debate the Committee received a request from the Minister of Health to get into touch with the General Register Office. This communication was in response to an earlier request from the Chairman of the Committee for the co-operation of the Minister and the General Register Office. The Minister's request was immediately acted upon and three conferences have been held (on March 3rd, April 23rd and October 13th, 1937), at Somerset House, between the Registrar-General and representatives of the Committee. At the second of these conferences, a memorandum was submitted by the Committee outlining two groups of researches which it regarded as desirable. The first group could be carried out on the data already available; the second and more important group could only be undertaken if the existing system of obtaining vital statistics were amplified by the addition of certain new questions. The most essential of these related to the age of the mother at the birth of each child, the birth order of each child, and the duration of marriage at each birth. The Committee was prompted to suggest these changes by the fact that the scope of the Registration Statistics in England and Wales is rather more limited than in most European coun-

tries. Indeed, on the existing system it is impossible to calculate fertility rates; these have to be surmised by rather unsafe analogies from other countries.

The Registrar-General, Sir Sylvanus Vivian, accorded to the Committee's suggestions a very friendly reception and pointed out that as long ago as 1911, and in more recent discussions with the *Eugenics Society*, his Department had been concerned with problems of fertility. On June 18th, 1937, the Minister of Health, Sir Kingsley Wood, announced in the House of Commons (*Hansard*, Vol. 325, No. 126, page 794) that he was giving consideration to the means by which additional questions could be asked in the process of birth registration while, at the same time, respecting the confidential nature of the information there furnished. The recently debated Population (Statistics) Bill will enable the desired information to be obtained. The Government's amendment to this Bill embodies nearly all the additional questions which the Committee regards as important.

The Committee has also established satisfactory contact with the Registrar-General of Scotland.

A Royal Commission

During the first few months of 1937, a lively controversy was held in the columns of the press as to the desirability of a Royal Commission being appointed. It was urged that the problem was too big and too important for a voluntary committee with limited funds. But the proposal was finally abandoned. The following passage is quoted from a leading article which appeared in *The Times* on April 17th:

"It is only too clear that eccentricity, irrelevance, and party fanaticism are ready to dangle their red herrings before any public body which will receive them. This alone would be an excellent reason for disputing the claim that a Royal Commission is the proper body to investigate the population problem at this stage. But it may be urged in addition that a Commission is more fitted to discuss policy and hear evidence than to conduct research. Professor Carr-Saunders

and his colleagues are not satisfied that there is yet sufficient information on which to base future policy. When that information has been collected and studied, then it will be timely to raise the question of appointing a Royal Commission. If research should precede action, then the Population Investigation Committee, with its expert personnel, seems well fitted for the task. Its fate lies now in the hands of the public, and there should be no lack of support for a venture of such importance."

Demographic Problems in the Crown Colonies and Dominions

The Committee is desirous of promoting a special investigation of these problems, and last July three of its representatives discussed the matter with officials of the Colonial Office. The Committee would like to prepare a demographic handbook of the Colonial Empire. This would throw much light on the conditions prevailing in a large area of the world; and it might extend our knowledge of the historical problems of population. The handbook might also lead towards an improvement in the methods of census-taking and of collecting vital statistics. The Committee would also like to make an analysis of Colonial figures where these exist in sufficient detail and accuracy. The most profitable region for this purpose is the West Indies, for which there are reliable records of very mixed populations dating from more than a century ago. These records may well present favourable opportunities for comparing the history of diverse social and cultural stocks and for the investigation of other important problems. But the Committee regards the handbook as the most urgent need.

The Committee's proposals were received in a friendly spirit by the representatives of the Colonial Office. Facilities were offered to the Committee in the Colonial Office Library and support has been given for an application to the Carnegie Corporation for a grant to be devoted to this special purpose.

The Committee does not regard it as part of its function to initiate research into the

population problems of the Dominions, which are self-governing nations. But it proposes to make contact with the census and registration authorities of the Dominions.

Research Secretary

The Committee is fortunate in having as its Research Secretary, Mr. D. V. Glass, B.Sc. Mr. Glass is well equipped for this office by the fact that, in the years 1935 and 1936, he conducted a survey of the measures taken by certain Continental countries with a view to raising fertility. His findings were published in the book, *The Struggle for Population*, which has already been referred to.

In the autumn of this year Mr. Glass made, on behalf of the Committee, a second and more extensive continental tour which included the Scandinavian countries. In all the countries he visited he received valuable help and was provided with useful information. In the course of next year, his findings will be published in a second and much more comprehensive edition of his book. Mr. Glass has also prepared two papers entitled "Marriage Frequency and Economic Fluctuations" and "Changes in Fertility in England and Wales, 1851-1931," which will be published in the near future in a volume which is to be produced under the auspices of the Department of Social Biology of the London School of Economics. The latter paper is a preliminary report on an investigation of fertility changes in this country which Mr. Glass is undertaking. The completed study will appear as part of the new edition of his book.

Educational Problems

The Committee has appointed Miss Grace Leybourne, M.A., B.Sc., Ph.D., as a full-time associate research worker. Miss Leybourne is carrying out an investigation of the cost of education in this country with special reference to the problems of the family. She is well qualified to carry out this intricate inquiry by her previous experience in the United States, where, as the holder of a Commonwealth Fund Fellowship, she engaged in various population studies.

Committee's Pamphlet

In April of this year, the Committee published under the title *The Future of Our Population?* a short pamphlet explaining its aims and needs. This has met with a favourable reception, and approximately 1,700 copies have been sold. A second edition is now being prepared.

Questionnaire

The Committee is confronted with a large group of problems which may be called medical. It is not known, for example, what proportion of married couples are childless through no wish of their own, nor what proportion limit the size of their families on account of the health of the wife and for other medical reasons. Very little is known about the extent and the consequences of the practice of abortion. Much the same may be said of birth-control practices. The Committee is well represented on the medical side and a strong medical sub-committee has been formed which has drawn up a questionnaire. This will throw light on many of these problems. But the Committee would have to subsidize research workers to help in the collection of the data, and also to analyse the material when collected.

Financial Needs of the Committee

The Committee has comprehensive plans for further research which it would like to put into operation if the necessary funds were available. A brief outline will be given of these plans.

The most extensive field of investigation may be called social. For the purpose of carrying out research under this head use can often be made of existing material, but it would be necessary in many cases to collect a large amount of additional information. The Committee has prepared a scheme of social research which may be summarized as follows:

(a) *The approach to marriage.* Here come such matters as the length and cost of the training required to take up particular kinds of work, the extent to which women are obliged to give up gainful employment when

they marry, the existence of obstacles to marriage in particular occupations such as the fighting services, and the extent to which marriage is postponed by those who have advancement in view.

(b) *Child-bearing.* This demands an inquiry into the position of an employed woman who is pregnant in regard to leave of absence, of the relation of the medical and midwifery fees to income, and of the extent of the provision for child-bearing made through the public social services.

(c) *Child-rearing.* Here come a large number of very important questions. We may first take housing. To what extent does the proportion of income going in rent rise with an increase in the size of the family? What provision is made in subsidized housing schemes for large families? How do the overcrowding provisions in the Housing Act of 1934 bear upon the size of family, e.g. if the Act were applied to the houses built since the war, could the inhabitants of those houses have enough children to replace themselves? Do flats discourage large families? Next there is education. In regard to education up to the university stage there are such questions as the influence upon family size of the maximum income at which it is permissible to take up free places, and the rise in the cost of education, as a proportion of total expenditure, with increasing size of family. As to professional and university education, there is the question of cost and of scholarships and the length of time before earnings can be assured.

(d) *Taxation.* A study is required of the incidence of taxation, direct and indirect, upon families of different sizes.

(e) *State Assistance.* A converse study is required of the assistance given by the State to families of different sizes in different social classes.

The above are only illustrations of the numerous important problems which urgently await investigation. The procedure which the Committee wishes to adopt is as follows. It desires to obtain the services of qualified research workers. These workers would, with the permission of the authorities concerned, carry out their investigations in

universities or other similar institutions. The Committee does not propose to acquire any building or to spend money upon any staff other than these research workers. The salary of a research worker would vary with qualifications and experience, but would not be less than £300 a year. The Committee would like to have immediately at its disposal at least six such persons, one for statistical investigations, one for medical inquiries and four for social inquiries, though it could well employ more. This would require at least £2,000 a year. There would also be the cost of obtaining the information in connection with certain investigations. This is less easy to estimate.

But in one instance, that of the Committee's medical questionnaire, it can be estimated fairly closely. It has been found that the doctors, nurses and midwives who are asked to fill up each of the elaborate forms must be paid for doing so. In order to get enough forms filled up a sum of £1,000 will have to be found. Therefore, since some of the social investigations will also depend upon the collection of material especially for the purpose, it seems that £2,000 a year will be necessary for collecting data, or a sum of £4,000 a year in all. The Committee is therefore in urgent need of financial assistance. Indeed, it cannot adequately perform its necessary tasks unless this is forthcoming on a larger scale than hitherto.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT (Summarised)

from January 1st, 1937, to December 31st, 1937

1937.	£	s.	d.
Jan. 1st : Balance from 1936 ...	336	0	9
Grant from <i>Eugenics Society</i> ...	500	0	0
Anonymous ...	100	0	0
Mr. J. Berington ...		10	0
Mr. E. Berthoud ...	10	0	0
Mr. C. J. Bond ...	5	0	0
Mr. R. P. Byers ...		5	0
Mr. L. J. Cadbury (for 2 years) ...	200	0	0
Mr. Calderara ...		10	0
Lord Camrose ...	10	10	0
Mr. Holroyd Chambers ...	1	1	0
Mr. T. R. Cubitt ...	1	1	0
Mr. St. John Ervine ...	3	3	0
Dr. J. L. Gilks ...		5	0
Hon. Mrs. Grant Duff ...		10	0
Mr. P. H. Gregory ...		5	0
Mr. W. E. Hedley-Dent ...		5	0
Mr. W. Kirtland Hinton ...		10	0
Imperial Chemical Industries ...	50	0	0
Mr. T. R. Innes ...	3	0	0
Lt.-Col. R. H. Johnson ...	1	1	0
Mr. G. D. A. MacDougall ...	1	1	0
Mr. David McKail ...		10	6
Mr. D. McLachlan ...		10	6
Mr. T. Maxwell ...	10	0	0
Mr. R. Meikle ...	1	1	0
Mr. E. R. P. Moon ...	1	0	0
Mr. S. Vere Pearson ...		10	0
Mr. R. Pilkington ...	1	0	0
Mr. Seeborn Rowntree ...	50	0	0
Sir Ernest Simon ...	100	0	0
Mr. G. R. S. Snow ...	2	0	0
Mrs. Snow ...	60	0	0
R. W. Sturgeon ...	1	1	0
Sale of pamphlets ...	28	0	5
	<u>£1,479</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>2</u>

1937.	£	s.	d.
Salaries of Research Workers ...	553	16	6
Expenses of Research Workers ...	97	4	10
Books, Reprints, etc. ...	11	7	11
Stationery ...	2	17	9
First Year's Work ...	4	18	0
Pamphlets, Printing, etc. ...	26	0	0
Questionnaire and Instructions ...	20	13	0
Balance ...	762	12	2

£1,479 10 2